



The President's Daily Brief

Top Secret 9 January 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
9 JANUARY 1968

1. Vietnam

There are major enemy build-ups in three areas. Perhaps the most immediate and serious threat is just below the Demilitarized Zone, where elements of four North Vietnamese divisions are concentrating around the allied base at Khe Sanh.

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2. Communist China

Peking, in a series of year-end statements about the Communist insurgency movements in Southeast Asia, made no pledge, even a pro forma one, of immediate or future Chinese support.

Although the Chinese claimed "brilliant victories" for the Communists in Laos, Burma, and Thailand, they preached the necessity of self-reliance in "people's war." The Burmese party, for instance, was lauded for its twenty-year "revolutionary civil war," then given the cheery word that "protracted struggles" lie ahead.

Peking's preoccupation with domestic affairs and Vietnam probably accounts for its caution. There are also signs, however, that leaders opposed to the Red Guard style diplomacy that ran riot last summer may be regaining influence.

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3. United Kingdom

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4. United Kingdom

A Foreign Office official says that Wilson's visit to Moscow is definitely set for 22-24 January. No agenda has yet been fixed, but briefing papers are being prepared on all the "usual" subjects, including Vietnam. The official believes that, although Wilson will not discuss an Anglo-Soviet friendship treaty, the subject will come up in connection with a final communiqué.

5. Australia

John Gorton will be the new prime minister, and may be sworn in tomorrow. His administration is not likely to make any significant changes in foreign or domestic policies. This morning he reaffirmed Australian determination to stay in the Vietnam war and show the Communists that "aggression does not pay."

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6. Middle East

Jordanian and Israeli forces exchanged fire along the border yesterday. This was the fourth such incident this month, but the first since 21 November in which Israeli planes were used to silence Jordanian artillery. These exchanges can be expected as long as Arab terrorists continue to enter Israel from Jordan.

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The Arab summit conference set for 17 January has been postponed indefinitely. This highlights continuing disagreement over how to deal with the Israeli problem. Syria and Saudi Arabia seem primarily responsible for scuttling the conference

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7. Brazil

Costa e Silva has again publicly stated that Brazil will insist on its right to make and use atomic devices for peaceful purposes. His foreign minister has been exploiting this nationalistic issue for some time. The President's statement, however, commits the whole government to this stand, and puts Brazil where it could not sign the nonproliferation treaty.

8. Iran

The Western-owned oil consortium has agreed to cough up an extra \$12 million. This is the amount the Shah, furious over the issue, claimed was still owed on the last quarterly payment because of the devaluation of the pound. Iranian officials have hinted that this payment may help them compromise with the consortium on other difficult problems, such as the level of oil exports.

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9. Congo

Mobutu is now described as willing to let most of the mercenaries be evacuated at once from Rwanda to Europe.

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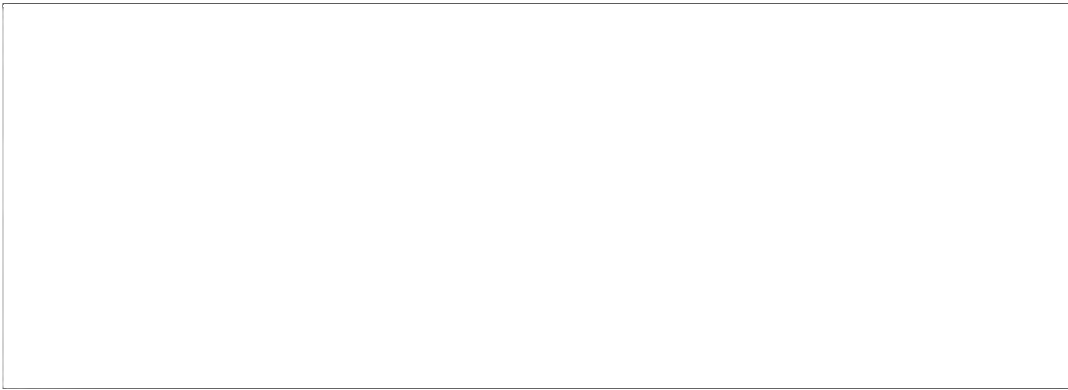
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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi on Negotiations: We have no additional North Vietnamese commentary on the subject of negotiations.

A Japanese news agency is carrying the replies of North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh to a questionnaire submitted by two Japanese correspondents. Trinh disparaged the President's San Antonio speech as a "deceitful attempt" to mask new escalation of the war. Trinh cited his statement of a year ago that a bombing halt is the precondition for any US - North Vietnamese talks. The interview adds nothing to Hanoi's position on this issue and the questionnaire probably was submitted to Trinh before his recent and authoritative remarks on this subject on 30 December.

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Report of Ho's Death Premature: Hanoi's sensitivity to rumors of Ho Chi Minh's health [redacted]

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[redacted]
[redacted]
the regime has gone out of its way recently to have Ho meet with foreign delegations and to demonstrate that he is relatively fit at present.

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Minority Problems: [redacted]

[redacted] minority peoples of North Vietnam remain a continuing problem for the regime. These people are only an irritant, however, and certainly not a serious element of instability.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

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